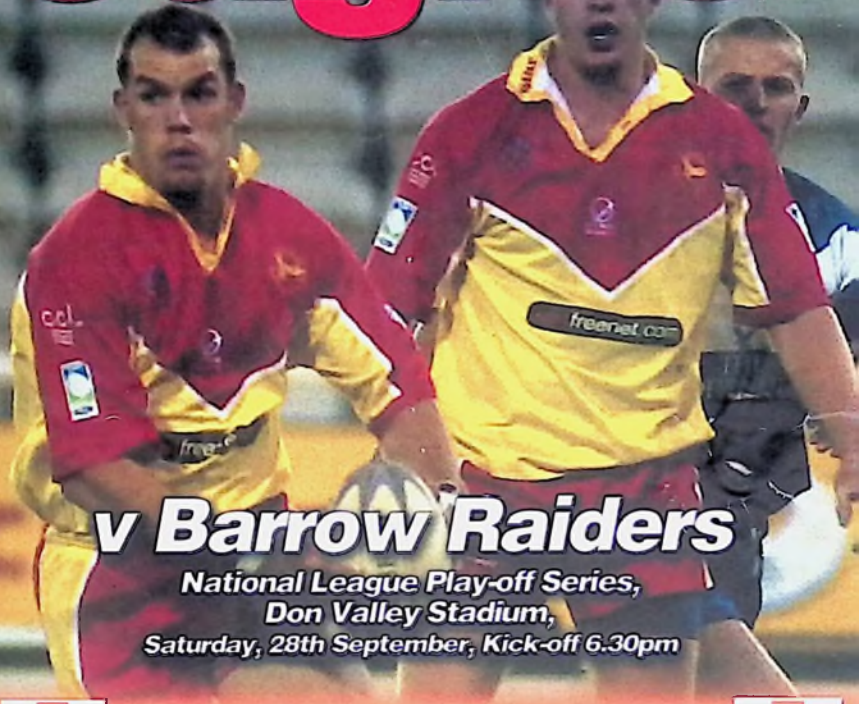


# SHEFFIELD eagles

www.sheffildeagles.com



## v Barrow Raiders

National League Play-off Series,  
Don Valley Stadium,  
Saturday, 28th September, Kick-off 6.30pm



Play-off series sponsored by AMCO Corporation plc



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# view from the board

WOULD like to extend a warm welcome to the officials, players and supporters from Barrow. I would also like to welcome all our fans to what will be the last home game of a very long season.

The season started on 2nd December 2001 and here we are nearly into October 2002 and still going – and with another couple of weeks before the Play-off final. The players will have gone for over 10 months without a holiday and, if the draft fixture list for next year is adopted, will only have three months' rest before starting the 2003 season.

Rugby league is a physical game and the powers-that-be at Red Hall need to take a long hard look at what they are expecting from these part-time professionals.

Some of the performances in recent weeks have been less than we would expect but, given the schedule that the players have had to work to, is there any wonder? What is clear is that it is not only the Eagles who are suffering. The Play-offs for the right to go into Super League have thrown up some unexpected results in the first two weeks with Oldham and Batley causing upsets in the first two rounds. These two teams will now play at Mount Pleasant tomorrow to decide who plays Leigh for the right to meet our friends from Huddersfield in the final. What chances Oldham coming from ninth in the league to claim that Super League place?

If that did happen would it be fair on Huddersfield and Leigh who have been so dominant throughout this long season? Love them or hate them, the Play-offs bring excitement and surprises.

And so to our game tonight. Barrow come to Don Valley on the back of some impressive recent performances, none more so than the demolition of Keighley last week. We have played them only once in the league this season and that was back in February here at the Don Valley Stadium when we managed a narrow 34-26 win thanks to a Craig Brown hat-trick and a brace from Gavin Brown who also kicked four conversions and three penalties. We will be looking for the

same sort of gritty performance that we put on against Huddersfield a couple of weeks ago to see us into the next round.

Last week's game against Swinton was a typical Play-off match. We were very disappointed with our first-half performance but, with the introduction of Mark Aston in the second half, we managed to turn around the half-time deficit and come away with a well-deserved win.

We have now played Swinton three times this season and all three games have been tight. We are, therefore, pleased to have got past them and into this game against Barrow. The biggest disappointment for me last week was the crowd of fewer than 500. If the people of Sheffield want professional rugby league in the city then we need bigger crowds than that.

We had to share the gate with Swinton and, therefore, made a loss on last week's match, something we can ill afford to do. Barrow's Cumbrian rivals, Workington, have been making the headlines over the last week, claiming to be struggling to find 17 players for tomorrow's elimination clash with Dewsbury. Workington went into the season with five full-time professionals and gambled on playing well to attract large crowds.

This has proved time and time again not to work so why do clubs insist on spending money they haven't got? What are the RFL doing to stop these stupid situations?

What happened to the salary cap? When was a club last audited? If clubs cannot put together a sensible business plan on their own, then the League should get involved and prevent clubs going bust or coming very close.

If we start to lose clubs either in the close season or during next season, how viable will the two-league structure be? Come on, RFL, sort out this mess.

I would like to wind up by thanking all the supporters who have stuck with us through this third season; the sponsors, without whose help we wouldn't have a club; and the backroom staff who work tirelessly to ensure that the players have the best preparation possible for each game.



By John Whaling, director,  
SHEFFIELD EAGLES 2000 LTD

## Sheffield Eagles

Don Valley Stadium,  
Workshop Road,  
Sheffield S9 3TL  
Tel: 0114 261 0326

### Chairman

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### Directors

John Whaling

Ian Swire

Brian Aston

Steve Dickinson

### Associate Directors

Ian Annis – Development

Chris Noble – Academy

### Football Executive

Mark Aston

### Chief Executive

Brian Aston

### Marketing Manager

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### Assistant Coach

Andy Tyers

### Team Manager

Graham Hutton

### Team Physios

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### Conditioner

Dean Thomas

### Masseur

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### Media/Press Officers

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### Website Administration

Trust Computers/Nigel Borham

### Statistician

Richard Pepper

### Photographer

Steve Braithwaite

### Matchday Co-ordinator

Jon Bauer

### Matchday Presenters

Gary Sinclair and Richard Lee

### Matchday Hosts

Steve Dickinson, Andrew Flower

### Programme Editors

James Collins, Angie Gregory

# mark aston's tubbs talk

## Salvage operation to rescue our hopes of the big stage

GOOD to see you here tonight – this is our last game of the season at Don Valley and I want us to go out on a high.

A win will mean that we will face an away game in the semi-final, and then who knows.

But I don't want to jump the gun.

I see this game as being really tough. All the teams left in the competition are going to battle because at stake is as place in the First Division next season.

It's also a salvage operation. Over the season as a team we have possibly let ourselves and our supporters down.

We set a target of the top nine and we haven't achieved that.

Like all the teams in the minor play-offs, we feel that we shouldn't be here – we should have finished in the top nine.

So now we are busting our backsides to win the Play-offs get the last spot in the First Division.

It's been a long tiring season but there's something to win and the team owes it to the fans.



## ‘We are busting our backsides to get the last spot in Division One’

We've got to forget the little injury niggles and get out there.

When we went in to the knock-out stages I said to the lads: "We've got four games left. We've got to get through those games and win them."

And we are finishing strongly. We turned in a good performance against Huddersfield and then did a job on Swinton.

Some of the more experi-

enced players have come back from injury at the right time, which is a boost.

Now we're in sudden-death rugby and as Richard Goddard told The Star the other night: "There are no second chances – lose this one and you're on your holidays!"

We've beaten tonight's visitors here so we've shown we can do it.

But, in the same way as us, they will see this as their way into the First Division.

We have another advantage – we're at Don Valley in front of our fans. That means a lot.

Your support this season has been great – it really is important to feel the fans behind you and hear them urging you on.

It helps with the motivation and no team wants to go down in front of its fans.

We want to get to a final, to win something. Everyone wants to play on the big stage and we're no different.

So let's end the season at Don Valley with a cheer.

Thanks for your support and I hope to see you all again next season.

TUBBS



# Eagles have to Holt Raiders ace Darren

**W**HAT a difference seven months makes, as the old song doesn't go.

Back in the cool of an early February Sunday afternoon, Barrow came down to Don Valley where Sheffield were victorious 34-26.

At the time the Eagles were hanging in there in 10th spot, whereas the Raiders were 7th.

Not only that, but all three Cumbrian teams were in the top ten of the NFP.

Everyone thought it was a renaissance for Cumbrian rugby league. Unfortunately, it was short-lived.

Barrow return to Sheffield for a Play-off match tonight, having stood in 13th place at the end of the regular season.

Only Whitehaven are in the top ten, with Workington just one place above the Eagles in 11th.

Had Barrow beaten Hull KR instead of drawing with them a few weeks ago, they would have been where Sheffield are because of their better points difference.

As the great Cumbrian under-achievers, they have not managed to beat either of their local rivals this year, coming closest to a win against Whitehaven

with a 23-22 scoreline in the Buddies Cup.

Their last game of the regular season saw them pull out a show-stopping performance though.

Against a Batley side that finished six places above them and have since knocked the Dragons out Super League contention, the Raiders ran in

**He is the Raiders' scrum-half, goal-kicker and creative engineer**

10 tries that day.

Cameron Bell unearthed a worthy man of the match in Paul Jones, an Askam amateur who scored four of the tries and put in a rousing defensive effort too.

In this sort of form it would be unwise to give Barrow space on the field, especially with their ever-busy and creative captain, Darren Holt. Holt is a former

NFP Player of the Year who was rumoured to be on the Super League Eagles "wanted list" at one time.

However, he stayed in Cumbria and continues to make a name for himself there.

He is the Raiders' scrum-half, goal-kicker and creative engineer. He amasses points with both his hands and boot, although his attacking effectiveness is sometimes blunted by the options around him.

He links well with stand-off Radney Bowker, who has become another mainstay of the team.

Barrow are trying to keep their spending within limits and encouraging and developing the youth of the area.

The big problem is that once a Cumbrian player catches the eye of Super League coaches, he does not stay in Cumbria too long.

But despite this and not fulfilling their early promise this year, the Raiders finished one place above their final position last season.

They are sure to give themselves a fighting chance of securing a place in next year's Division One.



*Play-off triumph: The Eagles against Swinton last week*

**S**HEFFIELD Eagles were given a few scares by a Swinton Lions as they moved into the next round of Play-offs for a place in National Division One.

The Eagles dominated possession but it was not until the second half that they moved ahead.

Eagles side was packed with experience and included on the bench player-coach Mark Aston who was making his first appearance of the season.

The big disappointment was the size of the Friday night crowd - just 425. Those who stayed away missed an exciting contest where the result was in doubt well into the second half.

Swinton took the lead after five minutes when Rob Gallagher chipped the ball from five metres out and ran between two Eagles defenders to touch down.

The Eagles, with Richard Goddard using every trick to open gaps, tried to break back. Second-rower Andy Raleigh did cross but his effort was ruled out for a forward pass.

Again it was Swinton who scored, through Phil Cushion with centre Mick Naryn adding the extras. The Eagles were dominating possession but the Lions always carried the threat of further scores.

Relief for the Eagles finally came three minutes from the break when full-back Andy Poynter produced a stunning 50-metre break for a solo try.

Goddard's goal was equally welcome.

Four minutes after the break Aston came into the action. He was to provide some nice touches and his half-back partner, Scott Rhodes, gave the Eagles the breakthrough.

On 47 minutes Rhodes nipped past two tackles to level the scores and soon after the scrum-half provided a long pass for winger Ian Thompson to score a deserved try.

Goddard added the goals and it seemed the Eagles had weathered the storm only for poor tackling to allow impressive prop Lee Hansen the free way over the whitewash.

A long penalty from Goddard stretched the gap to four points on 67 minutes.

Three minutes later Darren Callaghan was held up over the line but the former York star was not denied on 71 minutes when he went in from acting half-back. Goddard added the extras.

The final minutes were kept interesting as Stenhouse claimed Swinton's fourth try and Naryn kicked his second

## match facts

**Eagles .... 30 Swinton .... 20**

**Eagles:** Poynter; Ian Brown, Kite, Craig Brown, Thompson; Callaghan, Rhodes; Howson, Carroll, Traser, Adams, Raleigh, Goddard, Subs: Aston, Brent, Kershaw, Bruce.

**Swinton:** Thorpe; Shaw, Naryn, Stenhouse, Hudson; Johnson, Gallagher; Whiteside, Cannon, Hansen, Cushion, Ellison, Holdstock. Subs: Mead, Dean, Mahoney, Wingfield.

**Scorers:** Eagles: Tries - Poynter, Rhodes, Thompson, Callaghan, Kershaw; Conversions - Goddard 5. Swinton: Tries - Gallagher, Cushion, Hansen, Stenhouse. Conversions - Naryn 2.

**Man of the match:** Richard Goddard.  
**Referee:** Ronnie Laughton (Barnsley).  
**Attendance:** 425.

goal to bring the score as close as 24-20.

Substitute Billy Kershaw's try with a minute to go and Goddard's goal increased the margin to 10 points.



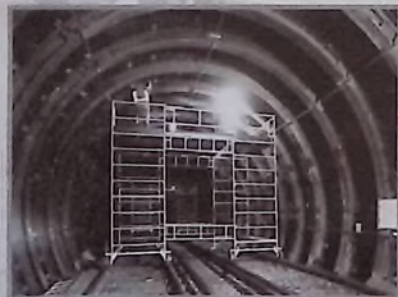
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## from the press box

with rugby league writer James Collins



### Well, I near-Leigh guessed the winners

**W**E all do some daft things some times.

Now as a journalist I have the opportunity to do the foot in mouth (or should it be knuckles on keyboard) trick more often than most.

So you would think that after years of spinning words I would learn – no chance!

Back in the chilly month of January with a New Year dawning in alcoholic haze, I sat down and wrote a column for the Eagles programme.

I chose to pick my top nine teams

for the coming season – you guessed it, I didn't quite get it right.

Now I could have hoped that no-one would remind me of the choices – no chance. So I'm coming clean.

Here are the teams in the Northern Ford as they finished in the league followed my choices for the positions.

**1** Huddersfield Giants (My forecast: Leigh. Look, if it can't be Eagles, then I will always go for Leigh and there's still time yet for them to finish top of the pile).

**2** Leigh (Rochdale. Well, I was close – see below).

**3** Rochdale (Hull KR.

Close again).

**4** Hull KR (Huddersfield. Dream on!)

**5** Featherstone (Workington. It all went a little pear-shaped for Martin Wood and Ricky Wright).

**6** Doncaster (Featherstone. Donny! I cannot believe it!)

**7** Batley (Oldham. Good result and I did write that Batley were my favoured outsiders).

**8** Whitehaven (Eagles. I had hopes).

**9** Oldham (Whitehaven. I told 'em Oldham would be somewhere).

Well, I got most of them in there, sort of. I'm glad to say I didn't risk any money.

If I'm foolish to go in for forecasting in the future, take it with a big pinch of salt!

Do I detect a note of smug satisfaction is some of the comments in the rugby league press (and from 'union gentlemen' scribes) about the problems some of the lads who made the switch to the 15-a-side code have endured.

There's persistent talk of Iestyn Harris doing a runner from the Valleys and coming back north to the Rhinos.

Henry Paul failed to make the elite top 50 England training squad.

I hope they do come back to league. But for the right reasons – because they are talented players.

If they don't become world-beaters at union it doesn't mean they are failures.

Jason Robinson has shown the switch can be made with great success but for some players switching codes won't work.

There were plenty of union players who in the old days joined the paid ranks and sank without trace. Some people seem to forget that.

I don't blame anyone for trying the 15-a-side game. The great thing now is that you can switch code without being banned for life – by the gentlemen of the RFU that is.

### Final NFP Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Huddersfield	27	26	1	0	1156	256	53
Leigh	27	21	1	5	1021	426	43
Rochdale	27	19	1	7	809	582	39
Hull KR	27	18	1	8	715	468	37
Featherstone	27	18	1	8	836	604	37
Doncaster	27	16	1	10	741	603	33
Batley	27	16	1	10	658	666	33
Whitehaven	27	15	1	11	647	600	31
Oldham	27	13	3	11	748	553	29
Dewsbury	27	14	1	12	723	616	29
Workington	27	13	0	14	677	677	26
Eagles	27	13	0	14	597	648	26
Barrow	27	12	1	14	707	670	25
Keighley	27	7	0	20	488	906	14
Swinton	27	6	1	20	473	918	13
Chorley	27	5	0	22	477	994	10
Hunslet	27	3	1	23	438	954	7
Gateshead	27	0	1	26	338	1108	1

*This is the last column of the season. If we win today it's an away day. Hope we get a chance to travel. Happy Christmas, see you next year.*

Support the Sheffield Eagles and win great prizes...join **GOLDRUSH** now

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# don valley team talk

## Sheffield Eagles

Team T G DG

11				Guy Adams
2				Mark Aston
				Lee Bettinson
				Jon Breakingbury
15				Andy Brent
14				Craig Brown
				Gavin Brown
2				Ian Brown
17				Jon Bruce
9				Darren Callaghan
				Adam Carroll
14				Wayne Flynn
				Wayne Freeman
13				Richard Goddard
2				Jack Howieson
				Greg Hurst
16				Billy Kershaw
3				Neil Kite
				Ryan Knight
				Simon Morton
1				Andy Poynter
12				Andy Raleigh
7				Scott Rhodes
				Richard Singleton
				Mitchell Stringer
5				Ian Thompson
				Simon Tillyer
10				Lee Trasler
				Nick Turnbull
				Paul Wells

## Barrow Raiders

Team T G DG

				Phil Atkinson
				Cliff Beverley
				Radney Bowker
				Dave Clark
				Andrew Henderson
				Darren Holt
				Shane Irabor
				Steve Jackson
				Wayne Jones
				Matt Leigh
				Taualupe Liku
				Daniel Lockhart
				Geoff Luxon
				Ian Marsh
				Jamie Marshall
				Barry Pugh
				Ian Rawlinson
1				Paul Salmon
				Mike Whitehead
				Damien Whitter
				Gary Winstanley